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|  | Case Study |

# Carlton Gardens Primary School

Carlton Gardens is a primary school in inner-city Melbourne. The school has 260 students from a number of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds.

### The project

The attendance rate at school was low and students were constantly late to school.

The school set out to make sure students could maximise their learning potential by improving their attendance.

### Key objectives

There was a high rate of absence within the school. Students were averaging more than 22 absence days per year.

The school wanted to achieve an average of less than 12 absence days per year and reduce the number of late students each day.

### Key actions

Carlton Gardens PS instituted a reward system, such that:

* Students who are on time and at school every day for a week go into a school wide raffle to win a showbag.
* The school created a trophy for the class who has the best attendance each week.
* Students who have perfect attendance for the term are able to attend a special party.
* Students who have two or less days away each term are given a certificate for good attendance.
* The school keeps parents informed.
* Each term parents receive a letter stating how many absences their child had for the term, as well as their yearly total. The letter contains information about appropriate absences as well as a table that shows parents how many days students would miss during their school life if their current average continued. Note: An example of this letter is included in this case study.
* Teachers are asked to phone families if a child is absent two days in a row. On the third day school leadership phones families.
* The school holds meetings with families that have attendance problems. Teachers work with families to try to find solutions and explain how serious the problem is.
* The school encourages parents to arrive at school on time.
* A member of school leadership stands in the foyer greeting late families and ensures that students sign a late pass.
* The school changed the start of the day from 9:00am to 8:55am. They informed parents that students who arrived after 9:00am would have to fill in a late pass.

### Evidence of success

In the four years since Carlton Gardens implemented these changes they have seen the average absence days fall from 22 to around 12 in 2012. Each year the school sets a new, lower target. While running these programs the school has seen a dramatic increase in student achievement. Over the past four years NAPLAN results and teacher judgments have shown a real improvement as attendance has improved.

### Estimated cost of the project

These initiatives didn’t cost a lot. Showbags cost around $150 per year and the class trophy cost $30, and is used from year to year.

### The future

The school is continuing to try to keep these strategies in place as they have been very effective.

### Advice to other schools

What worked well:

* Classes loved the idea of competing for an attendance trophy and it became a real incentive for students to come to school.
* The letters became a talking point for teachers and families. A number of families were surprised to see how many school days their child had missed and made a real effort the following term.
* Parent meetings allowed staff to give parents strategies to improve attendance and it also helped teachers become aware of issues that they were previously unfamiliar with.
* Students really liked being rewarded for perfect attendance. Over the past four years the school has seen an increase in students who achieve perfect attendance.

Ongoing challenges for the school:

* There were classroom roll inconsistencies. The school had to ensure that teachers were marking their rolls correctly.
* Showbags became an expensive option over time so that incentive did not continue.
* Some parents were upset with the perfect attendance certificates and felt it was too difficult for students to achieve. Note: Carlton Gardens Primary School has around 15 – 20% of students achieve perfect attendance each term.
* Due to other commitments it is not always possible to have a member of leadership in the foyer to speak to late comers, so students can sometimes slip through without a late pass.

Dear Parents & Carers,

At Carlton Gardens Primary School we believe that student success is dependent upon good attendance at school. Students need to attend school regularly in order to participate fully and gain maximum benefit from their schooling. Regular attendance enables students to access a full education, allowing them to reach their full potential. Students with poor patterns in primary school usually have poor patterns in secondary school and often disengage from school. There is a direct link between school attendance and achievement later in life. Poor attendance also makes it difficult for children to form positive relationships with their peers therefore; we feel that good attendance is essential for CGPS students.

**Attendance**

If your child has an attendance record around the state average for their entire school life by the time they reach year 12 they would have missed one year of school. Last year at CGPS we were above the state average for attendance. This year we are trying to get our attendance level well below the state average.

To help us with this goal please ensure that your child attends school on all designated school days.

Unacceptable reasons for allowing children to stay home from school include; fulfilling adult duties such as child-minding and interpreting, keeping an adult company, visiting friends and relatives, shopping trips, birthdays and ‘mental health days. Where possible try and avoid taking holidays in school time. If you are taking a holiday in school time please inform your child’s class teacher well in advance. If your child is absent please immediately notify the school. When your child returns to school please send a note to the classroom teacher that clearly outlines the reason for your child’s absence.

**Punctuality**

At CGPS we classify a child as late if they arrive at school after 8:55am. Children are expected to fill in a late pass if they arrive after the bell. If a child is 15 minutes late everyday by the end of the year that is the equivalent of 8 days away from school. Please ensure that your child is on time for school every day. The need for punctuality and the impact lateness can have on student learning and classroom routines. Our lesson structure dictates that most of the instruction is done in the first 10 to 15 minutes of class so if a student misses this it is hard to catch up.

To help us to achieve our attendance goal we will be sending out regular updates letting you know how many times your child has been absent so far this year. For this first update we are also sending out last year’s attendance figures.

We appreciate your help with this issue,

(Principal)

**Child’s Name:**

**Total 2013 Absences**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Days Absent | 3 |
| Days Late | 13 |

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| --- | --- |
| Days missed in 2013 |  |
| 0 - 10 | This is within the normal range. A child with this attendance rate is able to take full advantage of the teaching and learning opportunities to them. |
| 10 - 20 | This attendance rate is below average. A child with this attendance rate could miss over one year of learning between prep and year 10. |
| 21- 40 | This is a poor attendance rate. A child with this attendance rate could miss out on up to two years of learning between prep and year 10, |
| 40+ | This is a very poor attendance rate. A child with this attendance rate could miss over two and a half years of learning between prep and year 10. |

**Term 3 2013 Attendance**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Days Absent | 1 |
| Days Late | 4 |

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| --- | --- |
| Days Absent in Term 2 |  |
| 0 - 3 | This is within the normal range. A child with this attendance rate is able to take full advantage of the teaching and learning opportunities to them. |
| 4 - 5 | This attendance rate is below average. A child with this attendance rate could miss over one year of learning between prep and year 10. |
| 6 - 10 | This is a poor attendance rate. A child with this attendance rate could miss out on up to two years of learning between prep and year 10, |
| 10+ | This is a very poor attendance rate. A child with this attendance rate could miss over two and a half years of learning between prep and year 10. |